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ABSTRACT

The work of this Panel for the Evaluation of Experimental Literacy Projects was the assessing of how the pattern of evaluation it had previously formulated had been applied in the Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP). In the judgment of the Panel, by 1974 evaluation specialists will be able to present a report that will enable Member States to make a reasonably well-founded judgment on the value of functional literacy and on the efficiency of various means of achieving it. It is stressed that the full effects of a successful functional literacy program may not been seen for a decade or more. It is also the opinion of the Panel that by 1972, it should be possible to see on a limited scale the extent to which some programs have changed traditional practices in agriculture and industry. In addition to use of proposed indicators in the Standardized Data Reporting System to evaluate the EWLP, it is recommended that other material be collected also on qualitative and organizational aspects of the program. The Panel also urged that all projects work in close cooperation with the responsible authorities to facilitate the eventual transfer of pilot projects into national structures. The Panel felt that functional literacy works best when closely related to specific development objectives. The distribution of a costing manual to all projects and more research by universities are seen as needs. (DB)

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Fourth Meeting of the Panel for Evaluation of Experimental Literacy Projects

(Unesco House, Paris, 20th-24th September 1971)

FINAL REPORT

1. The Fourth Meeting of the Panel for the Evaluation of Experimental Literacy Projects was inaugurated at Unesco Headquarters on 20th September 1971. The Panel, established in 1967 for a period of five years to advise the Director-General on all problems of evaluation in the experimental literacy projects, held its first and second meetings in Unesco House, Paris, from 11th-15th December 1967 and 2nd-6th December 1968. Panel members also participated in a special meeting in Unesco House from 1st-5th December 1969, to consider the problems in the Experimental World Literacy Programme and to make recommendations for overcoming them. The third meeting was held in Iran from 8th-17th September 1970.

2. At the beginning of the Meeting Panel members and other participants were informed that Mr. Oscar Vera, who had played a distinguished role in the Panel since its inception, had died in May 1971. Mr. J. C. Cairns, representing the Director-General, and Mr. C. E. Beeby, speaking for the Panel, paid tribute to Mr. Vera's outstanding qualities and his important contribution to Unesco's work. It was unanimously decided that a letter of sympathy would be sent to Mrs. Vera by the Panel to convey their condolences.

3. The Meeting was attended by six members of the Panel. Mr. S. M. Sharif was unable to attend for personal reasons. Mr. René Dumont had resigned during the previous year; Panel members, while appreciating the reasons for his decision, stressed the value of the contribution he had made. The Panel also recorded its deep appreciation of the outstanding dedication and leadership given to the E.W.L.P. by Mr. A. Deleon, who, since December 1970, has been seconded as Executive Secretary of the International Commission on the Development of Education. Two representatives of U.N.D.P., representatives of three universities, the national director from Sudan, national experts from Algeria, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Mali and Tanzania, Chief Technical Advisers from Afghanistan, Algeria, Mali and Tanzania, the Co-Director of A.S.F.E.C. and evaluators from C.R.E.F.A.L., Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guinea, Iran, Arab Republic of Egypt, Sudan, Tanzania and Venezuela, as well as an international expert from Venezuela, attended the Meeting.(for list of participants, see Appendix 1).

4. The Panel decided unanimously that Mr. C. E. Beeby, Mr. A. Bouhdiba and Mr. D. Acquah act as Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur, respectively, for the Fourth Meeting (for the Agenda, see Appendix 2).

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5. Mr. J. C. Cairns, Acting Director, Department of Out-of-School Education, presented a general report on the substantial progress made, both qualitively and quantitatively, in the E.W.L.P. since September 1970. For training of senior national counterparts the new concept of field operational seminars had proved extremely valuable and was being extended; arrangements had also been developed with three universities to provide specialised training facilities. A significant turning point in the overall evaluation strategy had been reached at the 1970 Evaluation Panel and the associated experts' meeting; since then three experts' meetings have been held at Headquarters in May, July and September 1971, leading to systematic, professional development in evaluation designed to prepare for a preliminary progress report in 1972 and a more substantial report in 1974.

6. Among the important priorities facing the E.W.L.P., Mr. Cairns mentioned: (a) the need to develop effective relationships between the experimental projects and existing national programmes, to determine the ministries or organizations which would take over functional literacy responsibilities on completion of the projects, and to make effective arrangements for such take-overs during the final stages of the experimental projects; (b) the solving of problems of teacher-training, support, organization and administration as projects moved from the small-scale laboratory stage to the expansion stage; (c) the need to devote increasing attention during the final stages of projects to post-literacy planning; (d) the obtaining of additional sources for large-scale funding.

7. Mr. Platt, Director of the Department of the Planning and Financing of Education, pointed out the relevance of functional literacy as a potential answer to the urgent need of developing new educational strategies. He considered that, for evaluation purposes, monetary concepts alone would not provide the required answers, but changes in working behaviour and in life-style, together with possible side-effects not quantifiable, should form a basis for comprehensive evaluation of functional literacy programmes.

8. The work of this Panel differed in some ways from previous meetings in that it assessed how the pattern of evaluation it had laid down earlier had been applied in the E.W.L.P. The last two meetings had been devoted more to discussions of basic principles and the formulation of general patterns.

9. Evaluation: The Panel reviewed the application in the projects of its recommendations concerning evaluation. It noted with satisfaction that two important meetings of evaluation experts (3rd-8th May 1971 and 15th-17th September 1971) led to the establishment of a Standardized Data Reporting System as well as a precise reporting schedule for 1972. The Panel also noted the important achievements in developing a common approach to the construction of various instruments while still maintaining sufficient freedom in each project to meet specific local requirements. On the basis of two documents presented to it (ED.71/CONF.43/3 and EDA/2265/20.09) and after hearing reports by all project evaluators, the Panel is distinctly impressed with the great improvement in evaluation since 1969. The Panel recognizes a new professional quality in much of the work currently undertaken in evaluation, which it believes to be the most encouraging development in this field over the past year. The meetings of the experts in evaluation and methodology held during the year have clearly contributed to this and to the growth of a group spirit which was obvious in the discussions. This Meeting has made it clear that, with the increased experience of the evaluators, a certain quantity of data in a systematic form will be available from the projects by

early in 1972, but that anything like a comprehensive report on the results of the programmes as a whole cannot be expected until 1974.

10. Despite the good progress made in the evaluation of many projects, the Panel feels that some of the evaluation experts may still underestimate the amount of work involved in meeting the commitments they made in September and reaffirmed at this Meeting. They have limited resources of time, funds and personnel, and the kinds of data they contemplate collecting can pile up at an alarming rate and can put intolerable strain on staff, both in the field and at Headquarters. The Panel suggests that, if the experts find themselves in danger of being overwhelmed by data, they establish a system of priorities that will enable them to process a limited quantity of data properly and present them in a useable form early in 1972.

11. Although no definite date has yet been set for the presentation of the first report on the projects as a whole, it seems likely that Member States will expect a progress report for the consideration of the General Conference in 1972, particularly on the projects that will, by then, have been operating for five years. The information that will be available at that time cannot possibly answer all the questions that have been raised concerning functional literacy but it should be possible by then to give some significant indication of the degree of success that may be expected of the projects.

12. The Panel is confident that, if the evaluation specialists can maintain the rate of professional growth they have shown over the past twelve months, they will, by 1974, be able to present a report that will enable Member States to make a reasonably well-founded judgment on the value of functional literacy and on the efficiency of various means of achieving it. It must be stressed, however, that the full effects of a successful functional literacy programme may not be seen for a decade or more. In a rapidly changing world the final test of a functional literacy programme is not just whether it enables people to do their present job better but whether it helps them to meet constantly changing demands, both vocational and social.

13. When the first projects were started in 1967 there was a general expectation that, within four or five years, they would show a measurable effect on productivity. It is now quite clear that, except in a few specific cases and on a very narrow front, this is too much to expect, particularly as most projects took far longer to become operational than had been foreseen. Nevertheless, by 1972, it should be possible to see on a limited scale the extent to which some programmes have changed traditional practices in agriculture and industry. Experts in these fields should be able to make fairly accurate forecasts of the effects these changes in practice will have on production, without waiting for actual production figures that will be dependent in any year on the vagaries of climate or on changes of management in industry. So the Panel strongly recommends that Indicator 2.13 (adoption of recommended practices) be no longer optional but be considered as an essential indicator in programmes where it is relevant. Some participants in the discussion maintained, moreover, that this indicator is a far more reliable measure of changed attitudes than is any instrument for measuring attitude change.

14. If at all possible, changes in public knowledge of functional programmes and changes in the attitudes of employers, civic leaders, government officials and others concerned with carrying out functional literacy programmes should also be subject to some type of assessment.

15. The Panel then went on to consider whether the proposed indicators in the Standardized Data Reporting System, even when they are fully covered, will be adequate in themselves to provide answers to all the questions on which Members States will expect guidance from the evaluation programme. It is quite clear that more will be expected of evaluation than these indicators alone can offer and that valuable experience will be lost unless a systematic effort is made to gather other information on qualitative and organizational aspects of the programme. The Panel, therefore, recommends that project staff be asked to collect other material, not covered by the standard indicators, which will:

a) provide a continuing process evaluation of qualitative and organizational aspects of each project;

b) enable them to present a report on these aspects as a part of the final evaluation of the project;

c) provide information which will allow informed judgments to be made on the most effective inputs of the projects (e.g. the most receptive participants, the best organizational framework, etc.);

d) assist an outside team to make a clinical case study of each project at an appropriate moment before the experimental phase ceases.

16. To this end it is suggested that the Secretariat at Headquarters take steps to prepare a paper to guide the project staff in the collection of such material. It is suggested also that universities may have a useful part to play in this type of evaluation. Obviously, the cost of sending an outside team of, say, two people to make such a case study in each survey, will be considerable, and it is suggested that this might be the type of activity in which the U N.D.P. might be especially interested.

17. Mr. Luke, representative of U.N.D.P. at the Meeting, stated that his Organization would welcome the new emphasis now being placed on evaluation of results as opposed to evaluation for programme support. Discussions on the Standardized Data Reporting System reflected a blend of caution and determination on the part of various evaluators concerned, which augured well for the evaluation exercise now proposed. Hopefully, the results obtained by March 1972 would be sufficiently representative to influence significantly the future of the projects.

18. Although, of course, Mr. Luke could not commit his Headquarters, he believed U.N.D.P. would be disposed to favour increased support for the evaluation aspects of the functional literacy projects presently assisted by U.N.D.P., if this were found to be necessary.

19. Transition from Pilot Projects to National Programmes: The Panel had an opportunity to consider once more the relationship between pilot projects and national programmes. This question takes on a dimension of special urgency because several pilot projects will come to a close at the end of 1972.

20. After reviewing, with the experts present at this Meeting, the steps taken to integrate pilot projects with national structures, the Panel concluded that they were further advanced than the Panel expected and give promise that, in many cases, the transfer of projects is being well prepared and will proceed smoothly.

21. The Panel recommends that steps be taken to ensure the presence of at least one international expert beyond the pilot stage of the project. This will permit the carrying out of post-literacy programmes and any additional evaluation still considered essential. International experts could be requested under the new country programming scheme. The Panel urges that all projects which have not done so take immediate steps to work in close co-operation with the responsible authorities to facilitate the eventual transfer of pilot projects.

22. Definition of functional literacy: The Panel took note of the definition of functional literacy as stated in the Draft Programme and Budget for 1971-72 (paragraphs 323-327). The Panel underlined once more the need for flexibility in any definition of the concept of functional literacy. This is necessary to permit the inclusion of many different national conditions in a continuing clarification of the idea of functional literacy. The Panel confirms its statement on functional literacy appearing in its report of the Third Meeting (paragraph 24). Some members wished to underline the important contribution of functional literacy to the improvement of the quality of life and felt the concept should not be confined to economic consideration.

23. Functional literacy should serve not only in the achievement of specific and isolated development objectives but should contribute to creating an environment in which literate adults can work most effectively towards national development goals. However, experience has shown that functional literacy seems to work best when closely related to specific development objectives.

24. Costing of functional literacy: The Panel recognised the many difficulties of a methodological nature, but considered the costing of functional literacy to be of great importance. The Panel, therefore, urged that initial steps be taken by the Secretariat to provide for the distribution of a costing manual to all projects. This guide would permit the collection of information on the cost of functional programmes and thus form an essential element in the final evaluation of the economic viability of functional literacy. The Panel suggests that the Secretariat work in collaboration with I.I.E.P. during the coming year on this important question.

25. Research and relations with universities: The Panel was glad to note evidence of some co-operation with universities in the past year but felt that more could still be done. It expressed the hope that steps be taken at a national level to involve universities and research institutions in carrying out research of value to the E.W.L.P. The Panel is aware that many academic institutions are either disinclined or unable to provide the necessary research support. Difficulties may have arisen sometimes because universities have emphasized fundamental research, whereas the first requirement of projects is research that will give them operational support.

26. The Panel recommends that national universities be encouraged to complement, whenever possible, the work of project teams with particular stress on: (a) research in methodology; (b) training in research; (c) analysis and treatment of evaluation data; (d) all aspects of research requiring a special understanding of the culture in which projects operate. It further urges that contacts be established at local levels, either on a person-to-person basis or through formal institutional channels and points out that the greatest help will often come from specialised institutions, such as agricultural colleges and technical institutions. It was suggested by one participant that, in some cases, the most effective co-operation can be achieved by linking project research with some on-going activities in the universities. Finally, the Panel recommends that the Secretariat prepare a statement on a clear strategy on research, taking into consideration the long-term requirements of the E.W.L.P., including research to be carried out by national institutions after the closing of pilot projects.

27. One of the essential difficulties of research in the past has been the lack of adequate financial resources. Therefore, the Panel was particularly interested in the statement of the U.N.D.P. representative that financing of research may be possible within the individual projects' budgets if their funds permit, or alternatively, a separate research project might be considered, to be charged against the countries' Indicative Planning Figure if the governments so wish. Funds for "global" projects, on the other hand, are, at present, limited to 1% of the total U.N.D.P. resources available. Support from governments for a "global" or even an "inter-regional" research project would need to be carefully weighed before it were submitted to the Administration for consideration. If the Programme Working Group were favourably disposed towards a project of this kind, the endorsement of the proposal by three or four governments would still need to be obtained before the project requests could be processed further.

28. Follow-up on recommendations of the last Panel Meeting: After hearing the reports of the representative of the Director-General and in light of its discussions throughout this Meeting, the Panel is of the opinion that some of its recommendations formulated at the Third Session had been adopted in full and most reasonable progress had been made towards carrying out most of the rest. Mr. Cairns had stressed some of the early difficulties of many of the pilot projects due to unrealistic targets in the plans of operation. It was often very difficult to readjust those targets and to revise the plans of operation. Referring to these difficulties experienced by the E.W.L.P., Mr. Luke stated that the introduction of the word "pilot" into the title of some of the projects had seemed, to the U.N.D.P., to reflect a moving away from a limited experimentation operation, which in its view has been the objective of these projects, towards expansion. Changes in the direction of the projects had, therefore, been questioned. Normally, modifications of plans of operation through Adjustment Advice and Amendments were fairly routine. He thought that, at this stage, there would be little likelihood of negotiations for changes in the plans of operation being protracted, if they were proposed in the spirit of experimentation and in the interests of furthering project evaluation.

29. Finally, the Panel supports the Secretariat's plan to convene a meeting of methodology experts in the coming year. Such a meeting would be useful, if properly prepared, in stressing once more the experimental aspects of the E.W.L.P.

Appendix I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Members of the Permanent Panel

Mr. D. ACQUAH
Mr. C. E. BEEBY
Mr. A. BOUHDIBA
Mr. C. LOOMIS
Mr. J. LUTYNSKI
Mr. Shib K. MITRA

Evaluation Specialists

	National Expert	International Expert
Afghanistan	-	Mr. H. Mobarak, C.T.A.
Algeria	Mr. A. Ikene	Mr. J. Mourad, C.T.A.
A.S.F.E.C.	-	Mr. M. Hamza, Co-Director
C.R.E.F.A.L.	-	Mr. A. Tobelem, Evaluator
Ecuador	Mrs. Mariana Almeida	Mr. P. Wollrabe, "
Ethiopia	Mr. Laeke Abbay	Mr. B. N. Singh, "
Guinea	-	Mr. R. Couvert, "
Iran	-	(Mr. M. Bazany, "
		(Mr. H.-D. Kaufmann
Mali	Mr. Isa Kone	Mr. B. Dumont, C.T.A.
A.R. of Egypt	-	Mr. J. H. Saksena, Evaluator
Sudan	Mr. Abdel Aziz Ahmed (National Director)	Mr. A. Sammak, Evaluator
Tanzania	Mr. Emmanuel Mbakile	(Mr. Vishnyakov, C.T.A.
		(Mr. E. Mezzacapa, Evaluator
Venezuela	-	Mr. K. Neijs, Evaluator

Representatives of U.N.D.P.: Mr. Kenneth Luke
Mr. Pattabhi Raman

Indiana University (U.S.A.): Mr. M. Chiappetta

Nice University (France): Mr. M. Oriol

L.I.R.S.M.A., Spoleto (Italy): Mr. R. Calisi

Appendix 2

A G E N D A

Monday, 20th September

morning

1. Statement and Report on the progress of the E.W.L.P. since the last session by the representative of the Director-General

2. Statement by the Director of the Department of Educational Planning on the importance of evaluation of functional literacy

afternoon

3. Presentation by the Secretariat on the results of three experts' meetings:
   a) 3rd-8th May 1971 (Doc. ED-71/CONF.43/3)
   b) 5th-7th July 1971 (Doc. EDA.1797/27.07 and Doc. EDA.1854/2.8)
   c) 15th-17th September 1971 (Doc. EDA/2265(a)/20.09 and Doc. EDA/2265(b)/20.09)

Tuesday, 21st September

morning and afternoon

4. Review of evaluation work and consideration of the proposed working schedule

Wednesday, 22nd September

morning

5. General appraisal of the S.D.R.S.

afternoon

6. Transfer of pilot projects to national programmes

7. Costing of functional programmes

Thursday, 23rd September

morning

8. Research and relationship with universities

afternoon

9. Review of follow-up action of its recommendations of last year

Friday, 24th September

morning

10. Approval of the Final Report

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